

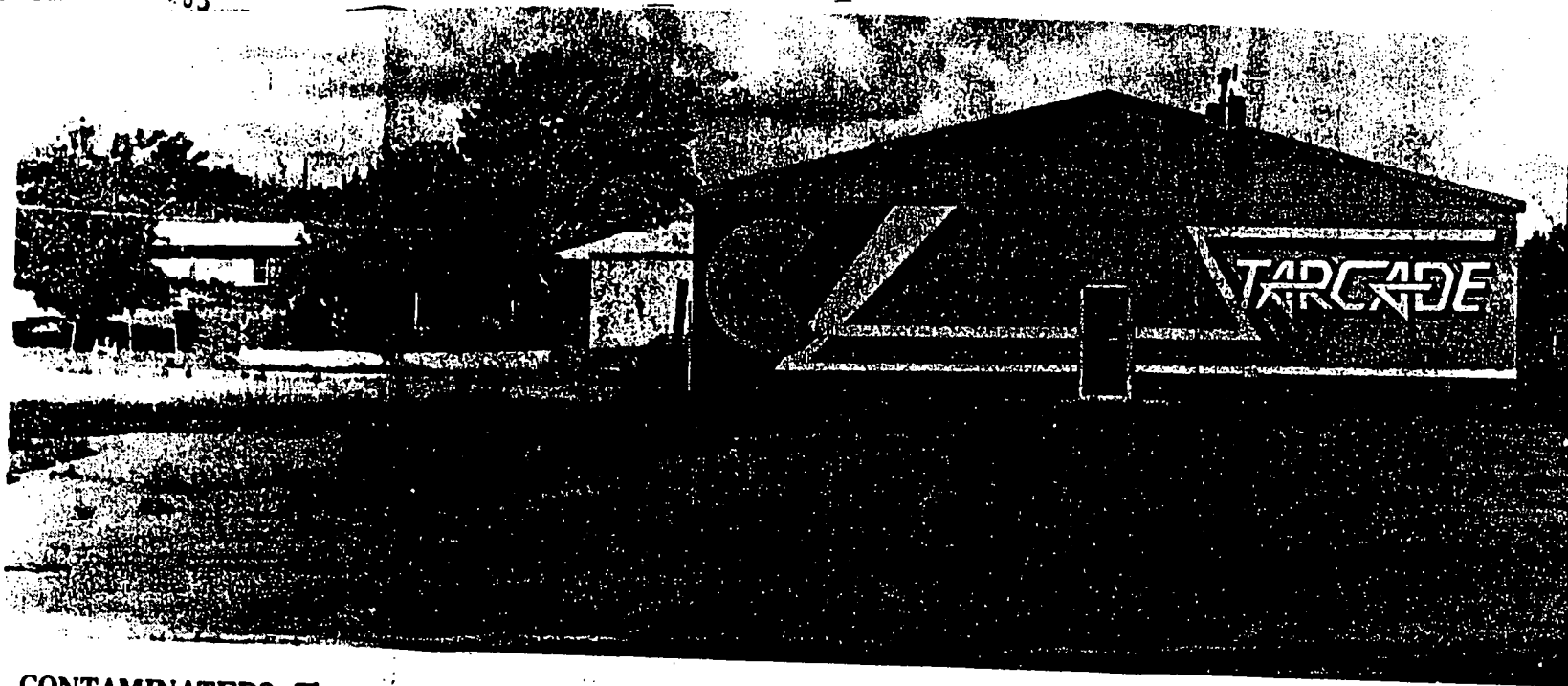
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**CONTAMINATED?:** The remaining building and adjoining vacant lot at 1002 South 10th street—former location of the Sooner Dial Company—are shown above. Oklahoma Health Department officials say there are “hot spots” of unaccep-

table levels of radiation on the property, making fencing and clean-up operations necessary to prevent “potential” public health problems. (Staff Photo)

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# Polluted site isolation set

The former location at 1002 S. 10th Street of the Sooner Dial Company, which ceased operations in 1969, contains areas with unacceptable radiation levels and needs to be isolated, State Health Department officials told city officials Monday.

At a Monday meeting attended by city officials, representatives of the Custer County Health Department and site owner Ron Grubb, Oklahoma State Department of Health representatives Robert L. Craig and Wib Truby called the site a "potential health hazard" but said that "we don't consider it a health hazard to people off the site." But they stressed the fact that it is an area of contamination that needs to be "cleaned up."

They showed the group charts of results of tests their department workers had made at the site which indicated several areas of high concentration of radium—"higher than 'background' levels recognized by federal and state standards."

Mayor Pat Cornell and City Manager James Luckett, who attended the Monday meeting, said today that fencing of the site would begin this week, under the supervision of State Health Department personnel.

The City of Clinton will be "involved" in the matter because health department tests showed that there are areas of high concentration of radium in the alley west of the former Sooner Dial site and from the standpoint of seeing that any "potential health hazards" are eliminated, Luckett said today.

He said he had checked with state public health officials who assured him that no radiation would have penetrated water lines in the area.

"It is limited to the surface soil, perhaps no more and maybe even less than six inches deep," he said.

What the health department officials are recommending is that the surface soil in the "hot spot" areas be removed, sealed in plastic bags and metal barrels and placed in a limited access area until they can be removed to radiation contamination sites in Washington state or North Carolina.

After that topsoil is removed, testing by the State Health Department operatives would continue, and the soil removal process would continue, if necessary, until the site is "clean."

Grubb bought the site in 1969, soon after the Sooner Dial Company ceased operations there.

How the radium entered in various "hot spots" has not been explained, but it is known that the Sooner Dial Company and its predecessors used a mixture of radium and a chemical agent called "phosphor" in the paint they used to refinish aircraft dial instruments to make them glow in the dark.

That firm rebuilt and redialed aircraft instruments removed from surplus U.S. Navy planes brought to Clinton-Sherman Air Force Base for salvage after the close of World War II.

It sold the reconditioned aircraft instruments in many parts of the world.

The 150 by 150-foot site contains a building now used as storage for video games owned by Starcade Amusements and a vacant lot to the south where one of the Sooner Dial Company buildings was razed several years ago.

Truby, who is an environmental specialist with the State Health Department, said today that his department is visualizing a joint effort between the State and County Health Departments, the City of Clinton and the site owner in eliminating the contamination problem. He stated, however, that his department is saying the cleanup is the responsibility of the owner.

As to the damage, Luckett said that health department officials told the group Monday that there is no danger to off-site people or activities, "but if some child wandered onto the site and ate some of the dirt in a radium-concentrated area, it could be a potential health hazard."

He pointed out, however, that Harold Bay of 716 Santa Fe Drive worked at Sooner Dial for many years and even managed it in its final years, "and frequent checkups show that he doesn't have any health problems."

Mayor Cornell said that he believes that "it is the duty of the city to see that any potential danger to the public is eliminated."

He said city officials are considering employment of a veteran health physicist from Oklahoma City to examine the site and advise them on remedial action needed.

How the State Health Department officials became interested in inspecting the former Sooner Dial site is interesting.

Some silk screens used at Sooner Dial to make their repaired instruments luminous again were sold at auction and wound up in or near Houston, Texas. They were discovered to have unacceptable levels of radiation not long ago and reported to the Texas Department of Public Health. Officials there notified the Oklahoma State Department of Health, triggering tests at the former Sooner Dial location.

"There seems to be nothing harmful about this situation except on the site," City Councilman Don Rodolph said today, "but the site needs to be cleaned up as soon as possible."

"That stuff must not be very dangerous, or people like Harold Bay wouldn't be so healthy," Grubb commented today.